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The Wireless Industry: We're Different! (When It Suits Us)

By [Adam Lynn \(/user/26\)](#), December 14, 2010

["Wireless is different."](#)

http://www.ctia.org/advocacy/position_papers/index.cfm/AID/12051

If you've been paying attention to the news surrounding the Federal Communications Commission's upcoming vote on open Internet rules you've likely heard this before. The wireless industry appears to have pulled a Houdini and convinced the FCC chairman to exempt wireless providers from the rules he is crafting to protect the open Internet. Of course, you're going to have a tough time explaining that to someone who plugs in a wireless card and expects to enjoy the same Internet they get over a Wi-Fi connection in a coffee shop or their cable modem at home.

In fact, even the CTIA, the wireless industry's lobbying arm, has problems recognizing why the FCC should differentiate between technologies. Not that long ago CTIA [stated](#). <http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=5514660521> "It should be no surprise then that competitive and technological neutrality enjoys nearly universal support as a bedrock legal principle."

CTIA went on to point out the support the principle had with senators of both parties and FCC commissioners themselves. When it comes to receiving handouts from the government (via the universal service fund), the CTIA absolutely believes it is no different than other technologies.

CTIA in its own words:

[August 11, 2010](#) (<http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=6015847094>) -

"The Commission is correct to pursue competitively and technologically neutral reform."

[July 12, 2010](#) (<http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=6015666265>) -

"The Commission must steer this reform effort steadfastly toward preserving its long-standing commitment to competitive and technological neutrality...The Commission exercised its statutory authority to adopt "competitive neutrality" as an explicit universal service principle, explaining:

"Technological neutrality will allow the marketplace to direct the advancement of technology and all citizens to benefit from such development."

[April 17, 2008](#) (<http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=5515043484>) -

"Given the evolution of technology and the marketplace, discussed above, competitive and technological neutrality have become even more crucial to universal service reform than they were when the

Commission adopted the principle of competitive neutrality in 1997. Intermodal competition, only a dream when the principle was adopted, is now a reality – and still growing rapidly. As a result, in today's competitive environment, proposals that would discriminate against certain classes of carriers will only harm consumers."

When it comes to wireless emergency alert system (EAS) the CTIA similar believes that any rules should apply to all technologies, [stating](http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=5515360112) (<http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=5515360112>) last year that a proposal for a wireless specific EAS "asks the Commission to violate its longstanding principle of technological neutrality." *Ars Technica* [found](http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/news/2009/12/big-wireless-to-fcc-be-consistentexcept-when-it-benefits-us.ars) (<http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/news/2009/12/big-wireless-to-fcc-be-consistentexcept-when-it-benefits-us.ars>) similar hypocrisy in the CTIA's advocacy on the treatment of Voice over IP (VoIP) service.

The efforts by the wireless industry to carve out exceptions and exemptions for wireless providers when it comes to Network Neutrality is blatant hypocrisy. The FCC should see through these transparent attempts to skew the competitive landscape and apply the same rules to all companies that offer access to the Internet whether through a wireless or wireline connection.

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